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House-Plant Health Hints

House plants that lose their leaves may be suffering from monoxide-gas poisoning, especially if after the leaves drop, the shoots remain dwarfed, branch repeatedly, and put out small leaves. Defoliation is also caused by sudden change in temperature, by shock from transplanting when the plant is in vigorous growth, or by changing from strong sunlight to a dark place.

Browning of the leaf tips is another sign that something is wrong. It may be due to improper watering, dry atmosphere, exposure to drafts or cold air, or insects. If the leaf tips of your aspidistra are turning brown, it may be that when you water the plant the water does not penetrate the ball of earth in the flowerpot, or that you have exposed the plant to excessive heat.

On palms, browning of the leaf tips is often caused by worms on the roots, or by lack of plant food; on ferns, insects may be responsible, especially if the fern loses its color, and fails to develop new shoots.

Loss of normal foliage color may be caused by overwatering, too little sunlight, lack of plant food, or insects -- especially scales, spider mite, and mealybug. Spotted leaves also suggest overwatering, or burning from direct sunlight on foliage not accustomed to it.

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